

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2941
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BAGHDAD 0335

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ECON, IZ
SUBJ: IRAQI POLICIES TOWARDS PERSIAN GULF

REF: (A) MANAMA 0181, (B) STATE 052879

1. IN THE COURSE OF A ROUTINE VISIT ON MARCH 10, I ASKED IBRAHIM AL-WALI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTRY, HOW IRAQ VIEWED ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OTHER GULF STATES. WALI GAVE ME A LONG AND RATHER DISCURSIVE REPLY. HIS PRINCIPAL POINTS WERE:

A. IRAQ IS BY GEOGRAPHY A GULF COUNTRY AND THEREFORE INSISTS THAT IT BE INCLUDED IN GULF REGIONAL AFFAIRS.

B. IRAQI VIEWS ITSELF AS THE NATURAL LEADER OF THE ARAB STATES

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OF THE GULF BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY ONE WITH A LONG TERM NATIONAL

VIABILITY BASED ON SOMETHING MORE THAN OIL. IN A FEW YEARS' TIME THE PRESENT REGIME WILL BRING ABOUT TREMENDOUS CHANGES IN IRAQ.

C. IRAQ VIEWS ALL ARAB STATES AS PART OF A SINGLE ARAB NATION ARBITRARILY DIVIDED UP INTO NATIONAL STATES BY PREVIOUS INVADERS. WHILE THERE MAY BE FAMILY PROBLEMS WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD, THE NATURAL TENDENCY IS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY TO JOIN TOGETHER IN CASE OF CONFLICT WITH NON-MEMBERS. IRAQ WOULD, THEREFORE, GO TO WAR TO DEFEND ANY OTHER ARAB STATE FROM EXTERNAL AGGRESSION, AS REQUIRED UNDER ARAB LEAGUE ARRANGEMENTS.

D. WHILE DISAGREEING WITH THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY OF THE OTHER ARAB STATES OF THE GULF, IRAQ HOPES TO ENTER INTO CLOSER VOLUNTARY COOPERATION WITH THEM IN A VARIETY OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES. IRAQ HAS NO PLANS TO ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THEIR POLITICAL SYSTEMS BY FORCE, OVERTLY OR COVERTLY, ALTHOUGH INEVITABLY CHANGE WILL OCCUR "SOME DAY" IN THESE COUNTRIES IN THE DIRECTION OF GREATER SOCIAL JUSTICE.

E. WHILE DISAGREEING SHARPLY WITH OMAN'S POLICY OF BRINGING IN FOREIGN TROOPS TO PUT DOWN THE DOFAR REBELLION, IRAQ HOPES TO BRING ABOUT BETTER GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS WITH OMAN AND IS ABOUT TO SEND AN AMBASSADOR TO MUSCAT.

F. THE KUWAITI REGIME IS "RIDICULOUS" AND PATENTLY INFERIOR TO THE OTHER REGIMES OF THE GULF AREA. THE KUWAITIS ARE ARBITRARY AND RIGID AND THEY HAVE DISPLAYED CONSISTENT ILL WILL TOWARDS IRAQ. WHILE IRAQ HAS AN INDISPUTABLE HISTORIC RIGHT TO "HALF OF KUWAIT", IT DOES NOT INTEND TO USE FORCE TO RECOVER IT. THE BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT, ALTHOUGH NOT RESOLVED, IS QUIESCENT. IRAQ IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT KUWAIT'S PLANS TO ACQUIRE A LARGE SUPPLY OF AMERICAN ARMS. NEVERTHELESS, IRAQIS CONSIDER THE KUWAITIS AS BROTHERS AND HOPE THAT IRAQ'S RELATIONS WITH KUWAIT WILL NOT DETERIORATE IN SPITE OF THE KUWAITI PROVOCATIONS.

G. RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA ARE EXCELLENT. THE BORDER DISPUTE HAS BEEN RESOLVED PEACEFULLY AND FAIRLY. IRAQ HAS NO OBJECTION TO THE SAUDI ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES.

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H. RELATIONS WITH IRAQ ARE ALSO EXCELLENT. THE BORDER HAS BEEN DEMARKED AND ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR TOURIST TRAVEL AND PILGRIMAGES. IRAQ IS NOT WORRIED BY THE ARMS BUILDUP IN IRAN BUT SOMETIMES WONDERS WHY THE SHAH IS DIRECTING SUCH A LARGE PROPORTION OF HIS RESOURCES TO ARMS WHEN HIS COUNTRY STILL HAS SUCH A GREAT NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL. THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM OF POWER BALANCES WILL OPERATE TO RESTRAIN IRAN FROM NAKED

AGGRESSION AGAINST IRAQ OR THE OTHER COUNTRIES ON THE ARAB SIDE OF THE GULF, DESPITE THE SHAH'S HUNGER FOR IMPERIAL GLORY. IRAQ NEVER AGREED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MILITARY ARRANGEMENT WITH IRAN AND DOES NOT KNOW HOW THE SHAH RECEIVED THAT MISTAKEN IMPRESSION.

I. IRAQ'S RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN HAVE HAD SOME "BLACK SPOTS" IN THE PAST BUT THESE WERE IN PART RELATED TO IRAQ'S PREVIOUS PROBLEMS WITH IRAN. THE RELATIONSHIP IS NOW IMPROVING STEADILY.

J. IRAQ'S LEVEL OF ARMAMENTS IS ADEQUATE FOR ITS SECURITY REQUIREMENTS, AND IRAQ DOES NOT INTEND TO DIVERT RESOURCES FROM ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BUILD UP ITS ARMED FORCES. ALTHOUGH IRAQ WOULD COME TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE ARAB STATES OF THE GULF IF THEY WERE THE VICTIMS OF AGGRESSION, IRAQ PERCEIVES NO EXISTING OR POTENTIAL THREAT THAT REQUIRES THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER REGIONAL MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS. IRAQ HOPES TO KEEP THE REGION PEACEFUL AND FREE OF BOTH INTRA-REGIONAL AND COLD WAR TENSIONS. MOVES TOWARD REGIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION BY ONE OR MORE REGIONAL STATES WOULD ONLY ADD TO THESE TENSIONS. IRAQ WOULD LIKE TO SEE ALL BIG POWER MILITARY PRESENCE REMOVED FROM THE AREA. THERE ARE NO RUSSIAN BASES IN IRAQ AND IT WAS A FACTUAL ERROR ON THE PART OF NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE TO SHOW A SOVIET BASE IN IRAQ IN THE MAP PRINTED IN ITS MARCH 1 INTERNATIONAL EDITION.

K. IRAQ HAS NO OBJECTIONS TO THE INCREASING AMERICAN ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN THE GULF AREA AND, IN FACT, WELCOMES AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY IN IRAQ.

2. COMMENT: WALI'S COMMENTS SEEMED CONSISTENT WITH IRAQ'S RECENT ACTIONS. IRAQ HAS CLEARLY MADE AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE ITS GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT TIES WITH MOST OF THE GULF STATES AND APPEARS TO HAVE TONED DOWN, IF NOT HALTED, ITS COVERT
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SUPPORT FOR IDEOLOGICALLY COMPATIBLE DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS IN THE GULF AREA. WALI DID NOT COMMENT ON A POSSIBLE SOVIET ROLE IN DAMPENING IRAQ'S ENTHUSIASM FOR REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. WE SUSPECT THAT THE SOVIETS CONCLUDED THAT ANY SUCH ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE DIRECTED AGAINST THEM AND APPLIED PRESSURE ON IRAQ TO

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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PREVENT IRAQI PARTICIPATION. THIS MAY ACCOUNT FOR THE CONTRAST BETWEEN IRAQ'S POLICY OF EAGER PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND ITS LACK OF INTEREST IN REGIONAL MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS.

3. WALI'S COMMENTS REFLECT AN EVOLUTION IN IRAQ'S POLICY IN THE DIRECTION OF INCREASING CONCERN FOR INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTABILITY AND A HIGHER PRIORITY FOR INTERNAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. WHILE THE MORE IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED ELEMENTS WITHIN THE IRAQI POWER STRUCTURE MAY STILL CONVINCE THE LEADERSHIP FROM TIME TO TIME OF THE NEED TO UNDERTAKE COVERT OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF BAATHI POLITICAL GOALS, THE TOP LEADERSHIP SEEMS TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT IRAQ HAS MORE TO GAIN BY SETTING AN EXAMPLE OF RAPID NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER BAATHI LEADERSHIP AND BY STRENGTHENING IRAQ'S ROLE IN VOLUNTARY REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES. THIS IN TURN REQUIRES AN EFFORT TO REFURBISH IRAQ'S RATHER
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TARNISHED REPUTATION AS A PRACTITIONER OF INTERNATIONAL THUGGERY. IT ALSO REQUIRES A SUSTAINED EFFORT TO REDUCE IRAQ'S INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION WHICH IS CURRENTLY MANIFESTED BY AN INTENSIVE PROGRAM OF HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL VISITING.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, THE INGRAINED CONSPIRATORIAL WORLD VIEW OF THE BAATHI LEADERSHIP IS CHANGING ONLY VERY SLOWLY. THE PROCESS OF OPENING UP TO THE WORLD IS HINDERED BY AN ALMOST OBSESSIVE SECRECY WITHIN THE GOI, AND ONLY THE MORE FOOLHARDY IRAQI CITIZENS HAVE CONSISTENT CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN NATIONALS. WHEN I CHIDED WALI ABOUT IRAQ'S OBSESSIVE VIEW THAT ALL FOREIGNERS ARE CIA AGENTS, WALI LOOKED SURPRISED AND SAID "BUT, OF COURSE YOU HAVE AGENTS ON YOUR STAFF AND WITH THE PRIVATE AMERICAN COMPANIES OPERATING IN IRAQ' IF WE WERE YOU, WE WOULD." IRAQ'S ZENOPHOBIC SECURITY APPARACHNIKS STILL OPERATE WITHOUT EFFECTIVE CONSTRAINTS AND UNTIL THE RCC CURBS THEIR EXCESSES IRAQ WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN IMPLEMENTING THE MORE OPEN POLICIES OUTLINED BY WALI. NEVERTHELESS, THE TREND IS TOWARDS MORE OPEN COOPERATION WITH THE OTHER GULF STATES IN ALL AREAS EXCEPT THE MILITARY.

5. IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES TO ENCOURAGE THESE TRENDS. DESPITE THE HOSTILE IRAQI RHETORIC AGAINST THE U.S., WE NOW SEEM TO SHARE IMPORTANT GOALS IN THE GULF AREA SUCH AS PEACE, STABILITY, AND INTRA-REGIONAL COOPERATION, AS WELL AS ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GULF AREA AND THE WEST. WHILE THE IRAQIS BASE THEIR POLICIES ON THE CONTINUATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE-KEEPING ROLE BY THE BIG POWERS, THEY WOULD PREFER TO KEEP THE COLD WAR OUT OF THE GULF. DISPLAYS OF U.S. MILITARY MUSCLE IN THE GULF REGION WOULD BE VIEWED AS HOSTILE PROVOCATIONS BY THE IRAQIS AND COULD PROVOKE AN AGGRESSIVE REACTION AGAINST THE U.S. AND ITS FRIENDS IN THE AREA. END COMMENT.
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